

ER 10-2145-a

27 March 1958

Dear Arthur:

I appreciate your good letter of 18 March.
It was good to have had a chance to talk with you
both at Philip Graham's dinner.

I am interested in the Russian novel, DOCTOR
ZHIVAGO, and I am planning to get a copy for my-
self.

Sincerely yours,

SIGNED
Allen W. Dulles
Director

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Esq.
Widener T
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

AWD/c
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1 --Reading

WIDENER T
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

10-2145

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.

UNIVERSITY 4-9710

March 18, 1958

Dear Mr. Dulles:

It was, of course, Pasternak who I was trying to think of at the Graham's the other night. If you have not seen it, you might be interested in Moravia's piece on Dr. Zhivago.

Very sincerely yours,



Mr. Allen Dulles
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C.

WRITERS and WRITING

Boris Pasternak and His 'Doctor Zhivago'

By Alberto Moravia

IT WAS in May 1956. My visit in the Soviet Union was coming to an end. On the evening before I left, I paid a visit to Boris Pasternak in his country cottage, some 40 miles from Moscow. I had been warned that Pasternak was a gruff, unsociable man. But he received me with great courtesy and affability, coming down the garden to meet me, shaking my hand warmly and accompanying me back into the house.

Pasternak has the look—perhaps common among poets—of a grey-haired adolescent. His long face, with its big nose and disdainful mouth; his thick, wavy hair parted at the side; his dress rather more elegant and certainly neater than the usual floppy, loose Russian suit—everything about him is slightly European, almost Anglo-Saxon. Only his dark eyes, with their intense, melancholy expression, tell of his country of origin. They are the eyes of a man who has been through bitter trials, and who has retained some-

thing of his experiences in his look.

During dinner, as I recall, his wife and young son were present, but Pasternak refused to act as interpreter and insisted on speaking French (which he did rather badly). The chief subject of conversation was not a cheerful one: Pasternak talked of the novelist Alexander Fadeyev's recent suicide and of its two famous precedents, the suicides of the Russian poets Yessenin and Mayakovsky. Although he did not say much about Fadeyev, I believe he ascribed his death to the same motives as those which led Mayakovsky to put an end to his life in the early years of the Soviet regime. The latter did so because Stalinist conformity had placed him in a position of isolation; whereas Fadeyev committed suicide because he was left in isolation by the non-conformists (or, if you like, the conformists of the new dispensation) after Khrushchev's "secret" speech against Stalin. In short, both these deaths were typical of a narrow, strait-jacketed society like that of the Soviets, in which one is either "social" or ceases to exist.

As for Yessenin, perhaps the best Russian poet after Alexander Blok, Pasternak gave a convincing but curious explanation of his death, according to which Yessenin, who had remained a village man despite the dedication of the new Soviet society to industrialization, killed himself because he felt isolated. "Yessenin was a child," he said, "and killed himself in a childish way, as though in play, and almost with the

secret conviction that he would be resurrected immediately afterward."

I have said that the conversation was not very cheerful. But this was less on account of the subject of suicide than of the dark and awful motives which seemed to lie behind all these deaths—the difficulty, the impossibility for these three writers, at a certain point in their careers, to continue as part of a society in which fate had caused them to be born. Their motive, therefore, lay in the fact that they could not adapt themselves "socially"—the same motive which, in Flaubert's novel, causes Homais the chemist to go on living, while poor Emma Bovary dies.

Then the subject of conversation changed, and the evening ended at a late hour, very cordially. Pasternak saw me to my car. I went back to Moscow, where I arrived at one in the morning. At five, I took the plane back to Italy.

NOW Pasternak's eagerly awaited novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, has been published in Italy by Feltrinelli. It is a long work of some 700 pages, which tells the story of its Russian hero from the beginning of the century until about 1930, when he dies. This span of history covers the decisive years during which Russia

What may be the greatest Russian novel in 40 years of Soviet rule has not yet been—and may never be—published in the USSR. That novel is *Doctor Zhivago*, by poet Boris Pasternak, who survived the Great Purges by confining himself to translating Shakespeare and who still lives near Moscow. *Doctor Zhivago* has already won high praise in Italy and France; Pantheon Books will issue it here in April. Here is an appraisal of the book and its author by Alberto Moravia, whose novels include *The Woman of Rome*, *Two Adolescents*, *A Ghost at Noon* and *The Conformist*.



PASTERNAK: WHY THE SUICIDES?

saw such important events as the Revolution of 1905, the First World War, the Revolution of 1917, the Civil War, the famines, the NEP, and the consolidation of the Communist dictatorship.

Doctor Zhivago is an historical novel in the sense that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is one. The life of the hero is not described as a private matter with a few historical overtones, but as the direct and continuous result of the contrast between his character and history in the making. Of course, Doctor Zhivago has ambitions, hopes, love affairs and personal affections, but the way in which his private life evolves and comes to an end is directly determined by the historical climate in which he lives. Moreover, many of the things which happen to Doctor Zhivago are simply things which happened to all Russians between 1900 and 1930.

But who is Doctor Zhivago? He is, I believe, an autobiographical character into whom Pasternak has poured the best of himself. Doctor, poet and thinker, he is not an ordinary mortal, a man of the masses, but a very exceptional man in every way, with great intellectual and moral qualities. Thus the novel is, finally, the story of the relationships which can exist between an intellectual and the Revolution, or between a human being, in the best and highest sense of the word, and the public events which carry him along with them and bow him down. Although *Doctor Zhivago* (as its author has explicitly recognized) is established on strictly rational foundations, the

hero represents, by reason of the contrasts between his lucidity and intelligence and the "inhuman rationalism" of history, the ineradicable (and, in its own way, *positive*) irrationalism of human feelings. The whole novel is based on this contrast between history and nature, between history and the person. The main, decisive episode is the very fine one of the love affair between Zhivago and Lara, which is interrupted and destroyed by the Revolution.

As I read this book, I could not help going back in my mind to my conversation with the author. Zhivago is a poet, like Yessenin and Mayakovsky; after terrible and confused adventures, his life, like theirs, ends in a sort of "social suicide," for Zhivago abandons medicine and poetry, adopts a vegetative existence, and becomes almost a tramp. But the author has not wished to attribute any symbolic meaning to his hero's end. Zhivago is a real man, just as his adventures are real ones. Perhaps that is why the book is a reminder of the universal destiny.

RUSSIAN fiction—as Soviet critics will agree—can be divided into two main currents: the fundamental, classic, objective one which, beginning with Pushkin, includes Tolstoy and, finally, Chekhov; and the romantic, expressionist one which begins with Gogol and continues with Dostoyevsky and similar writers.

Pasternak's novel seems to belong to the first current. The nonchalant and almost ironical way in which

he presents and manipulates his characters reminds one of the quiet, early-19th-century narrative line of Pushkin. But one thinks rather of Leo Tolstoy in connection with the clarity of the minor characters (observed, as it were, through the wrong end of a telescope, and standing out against the vast backdrop of history); the distant, resigned serenity of the author's approach; and his ability to describe in a few lines the difference between the collective scene and the individual spirit. Finally, many characters, including the hero and the woman he loves, both of whom are typical of the Russian middle class just before and during the Revolution, seem to have come straight out of the social atmosphere evoked by Chekhov in his plays and short stories. These resemblances may be due to similarity of material, but above all they confirm the barely-interrupted literary continuity of the Russian narrative tradition.

Pasternak is the greatest living Russian poet; as far as one can guess from translation, his poetry combines the most daring and refined type of verbal experiment with an extraordinarily fresh and immediately perceptible sensitivity. Moreover, he is a thinker, who can retrace the great cultural and human themes that lie beneath ephemeral appearances. The originality of his novel comes from this continuous presence of a poet and man of culture. The lyrical, fragmentary character of the narrative, divided into many brief chapters or scenes, the vague symbolism of many of the details, especially the landscapes and observations of nature, and the author's frequent expression of his ideology through the mouths of his characters—all this makes of *Doctor Zhivago* a composite, powerful book with few parallels in modern European literature. Perhaps it reminds one of Thomas Mann, especially the inspired Mann of *Doctor Faustus*.

The moral of this biography of "an intellectual and the Revolution" seems to lie in the ironic fate of the

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daughter born to Zhivago and the woman he loves. As her parents are cultured, socially privileged people, she is obliged, during the chaos of the terrible years, to return to the land, to the brutal animality of the lowest social level. This daughter of Zhivago, the poet and man of science, is known as Tania Bezochere-deva ("Tania the Rootless"). She is a foundling, a vagabond and, later, a washerwoman. One of the characters

in the book comments on her fate: "This has happened many times before in history. Something conceived in an elevated, noble fashion becomes low and base. If you think of Blok's words, 'We, the children of Russia's terrible years,' you immediately see the difference between the two eras. When Blok wrote that, he meant it to be understood in a figurative, metaphorical sense. The children, then, were not children but

creations or products; and the terrors were not terrible, but providential. But now, what used to be metaphorical has become literal. The children are real children and the terrors real terrors. That is the difference. . . ."

This would seem to be a veiled judgment on the tragedy, perhaps more biological than historical, of revolutions and of great social upheavals in general.

Fascism and the Papacy

Vatican Journal 1921-1954.

By Anne O'Hare McCormick.

Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. 238 pp. \$4.00.

Reviewed by Matthew M. Mestronic

History department, Fairleigh Dickinson

University; contributor, "America," "Commonweal"

THE DEPTH of the conflict between totalitarian Fascism and the Papacy is revealed in this compendium of articles written between 1921 and 1954 for the *New York Times* by the liberal Catholic, Anne O'Hare McCormick. Out of Mrs. McCormick's prolific writing on a myriad of subjects, Marion Turner Sheehan has selected about 50 articles, many of which deal with the Papacy's relations with the Fascist governments of Italy, Germany and Spain. Mrs. Clare Boothe Luce, a friend of Mrs. McCormick for years, has written a warm and thoughtful introduction.

Throughout the years of Mussolini's dictatorship, a *modus vivendi* existed between the Duce and the Vatican, mainly because Mussolini, a former Socialist and avowed atheist, shied from a complete breach with the spiritual leader of most Italians. Even during World War II, Mussolini respected the sanctuary that the Vatican provided for thousands of victims of Fascism and allowed Myron C. Taylor, President Roosevelt's personal representative to the Pope, transit across Italian territory.

The Lateran Agreement settled the issue of Papal temporal claims but could not remove the deeper dispute between Mussolini and the Pope, who shared the same capital for their

"opposed yet overlapping kingdoms." In a dispatch dated June 14, 1931, only two years after the Lateran Agreement was signed, Mrs. McCormick discussed the growing antagonism between the Pope and the Duce:

"Between the domains of God and Caesar, everywhere and always, there is a wide borderland of disputed territory; but between the conception of the state as developed by Fascism and the claims of any church there is a real contradiction . . . [for] the Pope claims that the citizen is first a man, Mussolini that the man is first a citizen. No conflict is as fundamental as this."

This conflict erupted again and again throughout the '20s and '30s over Mussolini's persecution of the Catholic Action, the closing down of Catholic youth clubs, and the dissolution of Catholic labor unions. The Pope, on the other hand, condemned over the years—through the *Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican radio station, and encyclicals—the whole doctrine of the all-pervading state raised to the position of a god.

Hitler's conflict with the Church was less subtle. Already in 1935, Mrs. McCormick reported a sharp clash between the Papacy and the Nazis over the question of the education of the youth. Hitler's post-

prandial ravings, stenographically preserved for the edification of posterity, show the dictator's scorn and hatred for all religions, including the Catholic Church, and his grandiose plans to substitute for the Christian heaven of cowards and weaklings a Teutonic Valhalla to his own taste.

By 1936, Mrs. McCormick reported that the churches (both Protestant and Catholic) were "the only organizations in Germany that stand out publicly for independence. The great political parties dissolved without a struggle, the trade unions were absorbed in the Labor Front." The emergence of powerful Christian Democratic parties in Germany and Italy after the war and the Papacy's enhanced prestige can be traced to the prewar and wartime opposition of the Church to the dictatorships.

Mrs. McCormick was one of those rare journalists whose daily copy can be read with interest and enjoyment 30 years after it was filed. The *Vatican Journal* essays are penetrating and eminently readable analyses of day-by-day news events cast against a broader background of history. Mrs. McCormick believed that a good journalist should be an economist, historian, archeologist and scientist all in one. She was all these and a poet, too.

Russia Confidential

Russia Against the Kremlin.
By Alexandre Metaxas.
World. 189 pp. \$3.00.

Khrushchev of the Ukraine.
By Victor Alexandrov.
Philosophical Library. 216 pp. \$4.75.

Reviewed by Simon Wolin
Author, "Communism's Postwar Decade";
co-editor, "The Soviet Secret Police"

ALEXANDRE Metaxas is introduced to us on the book jacket as "a French journalist of international reputation," with fluent command of Russian, who recently spent a year in the Soviet Union. Under the circumstances, one would expect an important contribution to what has come to be known as "Sovietology." In reality, the most that can be said for Mr. Metaxas, on the strength of this book, is that he is an optimist of truly heroic proportions.

The author discovered on his journey that the Russian "bear is about to break free from its masters" and that Russia is "absolutely boiling over." "At a not very distant date," in fact, "the Kremlin will be little more than a museum. . . . The future appears in perfectly harmonious colors. Slowly but surely, the existing regime will dissolve of itself." The present "muddlers" will be eliminated "by a sort of boycott." Thus, in a few words, Mr. Metaxas solves the entire problem of how democracy is to replace decades of totalitarianism and centuries of autocracy: The regime will just crumble away, and liberty will emerge "of itself."

According to the author, the Soviet Army, which already holds power, will play the main role in this transformation. (The book was written before the ouster and disgrace of Marshal Zhukov, which leaves little remaining of his thesis.) The Army, we are told, wants peace and freedom, but not a revolt. Moreover, an armistice between East and West "was more or less decided upon between Eisenhower and Zhukov at the Geneva Conference in 1955." The author appears never to have heard of the so-called Political Administration, the "commissars" who maintain Party control in the Army, for

he writes that "the Russian Army has now rid itself of the virus of control by the Communist party." In reality, Party control has been steadily strengthened in recent years—particularly, of course, since Zhukov's removal.

Mr. Metaxas has other startling items for us. For example, in the postwar years the standard of living has not been raised "by so much as a hair's breadth"; since Stalin's death, "the huge police apparatus has been dismantled" (actually, it was merely transferred from the MVD to the KGB); the peasants still form two-thirds of the Soviet population (in reality, they form less than half); the Party has 5 million members (the actual figure is well over 7 million); the Hungarian rebels failed because they tried "to pass in a few days from Communism to extreme rightism" (which, of course, is the official Soviet version); a *dacha* is a "huge block" of small apartments (it is surely common knowledge by now that the *dachas* are country houses which constitute one of the rewards of membership in the Soviet elite).

The author is also ready with the inside story of how Beria died: The secret-police chief, it seems, was very proud of his marshal's rank and deeply hurt by the cold-shouldering he received from the regular Army marshals. One night, he was at a party with several marshals, who treated him with great cordiality and invited him to continue the party at a private home. Beria, who was apparently an unsuspecting soul and never went around with bodyguards, promptly accepted the invitation. He was thereupon seated in a limousine between two marshals and rubbed out on the spot.

For more of the same, we have a

new biography of Nikita Khrushchev by Victor Alexandrov. Mr. Alexandrov recounts how the bright lad Khrushchev became a regimental commander in the Russian Civil war, achieved considerable success in the study of agriculture and dialectics, became a rising star in the Party while never using his position for personal advantage, and, by showing more proficiency at purges than the other members of the Politburo, managed to save his own skin.

The author claims to have access to all manner of confidential Soviet documents. He quotes verbatim from Khrushchev's conversations with Tito, complete with Russian proverbs, a pledge "to remain friends no matter what happens," and a proposal to swap wives. And he has Comrade K. tell an unidentified ambassador at the time of the Hungarian uprising: "I made up my mind long ago. If Hungary became a second Finland, there would be no objection on my part."

Established facts and dates in no way dampen Mr. Alexandrov's enthusiasm. He quotes Khrushchev's famous anti-Stalin speech from *Pravda*, although it was never published there or in any other Soviet paper; he cites "shorthand records of proceedings" in the Party Central Committee in 1934 in which Khrushchev allegedly made personal attacks on N. A. Skrypnik, although the latter had committed suicide the year before; he gives the wrong dates for various of Khrushchev's early appointments to Party posts; and he describes the illustrated magazine *Ogonyok* and the theoretical journal *Kommunist* as Moscow newspapers.

Even more astounding are Mr. Alexandrov's revelations about Khrushchev's political views. We learn that the Soviet Party boss favors "the